



In What Mode the Forces of All Principalities Should Be Measured

In examining the qualities of these principalities one must admit another consideration; that is, whether a prince has enough of a state that he can rule by himself when he needs to, or whether he is always under the necessity of being defended by others. And, to better clarify this issue, I say

that I judge those capable of ruling by themselves who can, by abundance of either men or money, put together an adequate army and fight a battle¹ against whoever comes to attack them; and I judge as well that those always have necessity of others who cannot appear in the field against an enemy, but are compelled of necessity to take refuge behind walls and to guard them. The first case has been discussed, and in what is to come we will say what is required for it. In the second case one can only exhort such princes to fortify and supply their own towns,² and to take no account of the countryside. And whoever has fortified his town well, and has managed the other governing of his subjects as was said above and will be said below, will be attacked always with great hesitation; for men are always hostile to undertakings where difficulties may be seen, and one can see it is not easy to attack one who has a strong town and is not hated by the people.

The cities of Germany³ are very free, have little countryside, and obey the emperor when they want to; they do not fear either him or any other power around, because they are so well fortified that everyone thinks their capture would be toilsome and difficult. For all of them have suitable ditches and walls, and sufficient artillery; they always keep in their public stores enough to drink and to eat and to burn for a year. Besides this, so as to keep the plebs fed without loss to the public, they always keep in common supply enough to be able to give them work for a year in employments that are the nerve and the life of that city and of the industries from which the plebs is fed. They still hold

1. lit.: a just army and make a day; see NM, *Discourses on Livy* II 17.

2. lit.: land or earth.

3. NM discussed the German cities in *Discourses on Livy* I 55; II pr., 19; and also in two minor works, *Rapporto delle cose della Magna* and *Ritratto delle cose della Magna*.

military exercises in repute, and they have many institutions⁴ to maintain them.

Thus a prince who has a strong city and does not make himself hated cannot be attacked; and if indeed there is someone who would attack him, he would have to retreat in shame, for worldly things are so variable that it is next to impossible for one to stand with his armies idle in a siege for a year. And someone might reply: if the people have their possessions outside, and see them burning, they will not have patience for this, and the long siege and their love⁵ for their own will make them forget the prince. I respond that a powerful and spirited prince will always overcome all these difficulties, now by giving hope to his subjects that the evil will not last long, now by giving them fear of the enemy's cruelty, now by securing himself skillfully against those who appear to him too bold. Besides this, the enemy reasonably would burn and ruin the countryside on his arrival, at a time when men's spirits are still hot and willing for defense; and thus the prince should hesitate so much the less, because after several days, when spirits have cooled, the damage has already been done, the evil has been received, and there is no more remedy for it. At that time they come to unite with their prince so much the more, since it appears he has an obligation toward them, their houses having been burned and their possessions ruined in his defense. And the nature of men is to be obligated as much by benefits they give as by benefits they receive. Hence, if one considers all this well, it should not be difficult for a prudent prince to keep the spirits of his citizens firm in the siege, at first and later, provided he does not lack the wherewithal for life and for defense.

4. lit.: orders.

5. lit.: charity.